

ROUTINE

UNCLASSIFIED

INCOMING

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ARA/NEA REARCS

RIG 78

PAGE 01 OF 03 CARACA 03703 00 OF 03 141616Z 023551. 0064457
ACTION: UE (02)INFO: DAND (02) RJ (01) MM (01) JPL (01) JRX (01) ARA (01) PPC (01)
PPA (01) OAS (01) EPSC (04) DEPSC (01) SW (01) CO (02) EC (01)
PE (01) BL (01) DCAR (01) DEP (01) TDGY (01)

----- 14/1823Z A1 RD (TOTAL COPIES: 026)

ACTION ARA-00

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-00 ACDE-00 AID-00 ACQ-00 BODE-00 DOEE-00
SRPP-00 DS-00 UTED-00 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 LAB-01
L-00 ADS-00 NRRC-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OMB-01 DPIC-01
PA-00 PM-00 PRS-00 P-00 SP-00 TRSE-00 T-00
USIE-00 PMB-00 DSCC-00 PRM-01 ORL-02 G-00 FDIC-01
SAS-00 /019W

----- 8C96FD 141619Z /38

R 141608Z DEC 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2541
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
USINT HAVANA
USCINCSOUTH MIAMI FL
CIA WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS CARACAS 003703

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOU, PREL, OAS, USIA, VE
SUBJECT: OAS DECLARES DECEMBER 6 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION "CLEAN, FREE, AND TRANSPARENT"

SUMMARY

1. (U) THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL PROCESS WAS CLEAN, FREE AND TRANSPARENT ACCORDING TO OAS ELECTION OBSERVERS. WHILE NOTING SOME MINOR PROBLEMS, THE OAS OBSERVER GROUP DECLARED THE DECEMBER 6 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BETTER ORGANIZED AND MORE EFFICIENT THAN THE NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS. ON DECEMBER 6 THE OAS ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE THAT DISCUSSED THE PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF ITS OBSERVER MISSION FOR THE DECEMBER 6 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THIS PRESS RELEASE WAS A FOLLOW-UP TO A NOVEMBER 30 COMMUNIQUE DESCRIBING OAS PREPARATIONS FOR THE ELECTIONS. BOTH COMMUNIQUES DESCRIBED HOW THE OAS CARRIED OUT ITS OBSERVER MISSION, INCLUDING OAS RELATIONS WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CNE) AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL CENTERS AND THE PLACEMENT OF OBSERVERS, AND DIRECT OBSERVATION OF THE OPENING, VOTING, AND CLOSING PROCEDURES AT THE POLLING STATIONS. THE FOLLOWING ARE UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATIONS OF THOSE PRESS RELEASES. END SUMMARY.

DECEMBER 6 PRESS RELEASE

2. (U) BEGIN TEXT:

BY INVITATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA AND THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CNE), THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) ESTABLISHED AN OBSERVATION MISSION TO MONITOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF EDGARDO REIS,

A BRAZILIAN CITIZEN WITH VAST EXPERIENCE IN OBSERVATION WORK. THE MISSION FIRST ARRIVED IN VENEZUELA IN OCTOBER 1992. WE IT ON TO

CARACA 03703 00 OF 03 141616Z 023551 SD64457
OBSERVE THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS, AND HAS MAINTAINED A PRESENCE SINCE THAT TIME. IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, THE OAS HAS PARTICIPATED IN ALMOST 40 ELECTION OBSERVER MISSIONS IN OVER 15 NATIONS IN THE HEMISPHERE. THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE OAS, CESAR GAVIRIA, HAS BEEN PRESENT FOR THE ELECTIONS.

SIXTY-FIVE MEMBERS OF THE ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION, CONSISTING OF CITIZENS FROM NINETEEN OAS MEMBER NATIONS (ARGENTINA, BARBADOS, BOLIVIA, BRAZIL, CANADA, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ECUADOR, GUATEMALA, MEXICO, NICARAGUA, PARAGUAY, PERU, SPAIN, SURINAME, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, THE UNITED STATES, AND URUGUAY) OBSERVED THE DECEMBER 6 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA.

THE OAS MISSION SET-UP HEADQUARTERS IN CARACAS, AND SATELLITE OFFICES IN THE CITIES OF LOS TEQUES, SAN FERNANDO, BARINAS, MARACAIBO, BARQUISIMETO, VALENCIA, CUMANA, PUERTO LA CRUZ, CIUDAD BOLIVAR, AND MERIDA. UPON ARRIVAL, OBSERVERS ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES, POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVES, THE ARMED FORCES, MEDIA, AND GENERAL PUBLIC TO OBSERVE THE DELIVERY OF ELECTION MATERIALS. OBSERVERS ALSO MET WITH THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES AND THE CNE.

ON DECEMBER 6, OBSERVERS WERE PRESENT DURING VOTING TABLE INSTALLATION AND FOLLOWED THE VOTING PROCESS THROUGHOUT THE DAY. MOREOVER, THEY MONITORED THE CLOSING OF VOTING TABLES AND THE COMPUTERIZED VOTING MACHINES. OBSERVERS THEN PROCEEDED TO WATCH THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES AT THE REGIONAL OFFICES.

THE COMPUTERIZED VOTING SYSTEM RECEIVED SPECIAL ATTENTION FROM OBSERVERS. USING THESE RESULTS ALONG WITH THE RESULTS TAKEN MANUALLY FROM A FEW TABLES, THE OAS MISSION MADE ITS OWN PROJECTION FOR INTERNAL USE ABOUT THE POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE (USING THE RAPID COUNT MECHANISM). THIS PROJECTION SERVED AS A COMPARISON FOR THE ACTUAL RESULTS. THE REPORT FROM THE OBSERVERS AND THE RESULTS OF THE INTERNAL PROJECTION WILL BE INCLUDED IN A REPORT FROM THE OAS SECRETARY GENERAL PRESENTED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

GIVEN THE OBSERVER INFORMATION AS OF THE TIME OF THIS PUBLICATION, THE OAS ELECTORAL OBSERVER MISSION WISHES TO COMMUNICATE THE FOLLOWING:

-- TABLE INSTALLATION: THE VAST MAJORITY OF TABLE INSTALLATION OCCURRED AFTER THE PRESCRIBED TIME (6:00 AM). THIS CAUSED A SLIGHT DELAY (BETWEEN A HALF AN HOUR TO AN HOUR IN MOST CASES), WHICH WAS SUBSTANTIALLY LESS THAN THE DELAYS IN THE NOVEMBER 8 ELECTION. VOTING PROCEEDED IN AN ORDERLY MANNER DUE IN PART TO THE FACT THAT VOTERS WERE FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCATION OF THE VOTING TABLES, AND THAT THEY WERE ONLY SELECTING ONE CANDIDATE AND ONE POLITICAL PARTY. MINOR PROBLEMS WERE OBSERVED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DAY WITH RESPECT TO THE CONFIGURATION OF VOTING TABLES. SOME TABLE

WORKERS, CHOSEN BY LOT, DID NOT SHOW UP AT THE SPECIFIED TIME AND HAD TO BE REPLACED.

-- VOTING: ELECTIONS TOOK PLACE IN A CALM AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT DEMONSTRATING THE VENEZUELA'S CIVIC AND DEMOCRATIC PRIDE. IT COULD NOT BE VERIFIED DURING THE VOTING, NEITHER AT THE TABLES NOR

OUTSIDE THE VOTING STATIONS, THAT ANY INCONVENIENCES, EVENTS, INCIDENTS THAT MIGHT HAVE IMPEDED THE NORMAL PROCESS, OR CASES OF VOTER INTIMIDATION OCCURRED. VOTER PARTICIPATION WAS SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN IN THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS OR THE LAST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THE CYCLE OF LOW VOTER PARTICIPATION THAT HAD BEEN OBSERVED IN PREVIOUS NATIONAL ELECTIONS WAS BROKEN.

-- MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES INVOLVED IN THE FIAN REPUBLICA

ROUTINE

UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

INCOMING

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ARA/NEA REARCS

PAGE 02 OF 03 CARACA 03703 00 OF 03 141616Z 023551 S064457
 REPUBLIC PLAND WERE PRESENT IN ALL OBSERVATION SITES AND HELPED
 EASE THE INSTALLATION PROCESS AND ORGANIZE THE VOTE. IN SOME
 RECENT ELECTIONS THEIR PRESENCE INTERFERED WITH THE SECRECY OF THE
 VOTING PROCESS. IN THIS ELECTION, THE MISSION DID NOT OBSERVE THE
 MILITARY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEIR POSITION TO INFLUENCE OR
 MANIPULATE THE VOTE.

-- DESPITE A SOMEWHAT LENGTHY INDIVIDUAL VOTING PROCESS (THE
 PROCESS OF VOTER IDENTIFICATION, VOTER AND BALLOT REGISTRATION,
 IDENTIFICATION OF THE BALLOT SECURITY STUB, VOTING, AND RETURN OF
 THE ID CARD), VOTING WENT VERY SMOOTHLY IN THE OBSERVED VOTING
 STATIONS. NO IRREGULARITIES THAT COULD AFFECT THE TRANSPARENCY OF
 THIS PROCESS WERE NOTED.

IN GENERAL, THERE WAS A VAST IMPROVEMENT IN COMPARISON WITH THE
 NOVEMBER 8 ELECTIONS THANKS TO BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE
 TECHNOLOGY, MORE EXPERIENCED TABLE WORKERS, AND THE MASSES OF
 VOTERS THAT ARRIVED AT THE POLLING STATIONS EARLY.

-- IRREGULARITIES: THE MISSION DETECTED SOME SMALL PROBLEMS WITH
 RESPECT TO THE PRINTING ON THE BALLOTS. IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF EL
 RECREO, IN SAN FERNANDO DE APURE, ROUGHLY 400 BALLOTS WERE QUICKLY
 REPLACED DUE TO POTS (INK DOTS) NEAR THE VOTING OVALS.

-- POLITICAL WITNESSES: THE PRESENCE OF FEWER POLITICAL WITNESSES
 HELPED STEM PREVIOUS COMPLAINTS ABOUT CONGESTION IN VOTING
 STATIONS. PARTY WITNESSES WERE LIMITED TO TWO OR THREE
 REPRESENTATIVES FROM KEY POLITICAL PARTIES BUT, IN THE OPINION OF
 THE MISSION, THIS RESTRICTION DID NOT AFFECT THE ABILITY TO OBSERVE
 THE VOTING PROCESS.

-- MACHINES: THERE WERE NO DIFFICULTIES OBSERVED DURING THE VOTING
 DAY WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE VOTING MACHINES OR WITH THE
 PRINTERS. SMALL PROBLEMS THAT AROSE WERE QUICKLY RESOLVED. THE
 INCIDENCE OF THESE PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, DID NOT AFFECT THE NORMAL
 FUNCTION OF THE VOTING NOR THE OBSERVATION.

-- COOTS: THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BEFORE THE ELECTION AND
 THOSE DURING AND REGARDING THE ELECTION DAY, EITHER WERE OR WILL BE
 TRANSMITTED TO ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES AND WILL BE TRACKED AS TO THE
 ACTIONS TAKEN IN EACH CASE. AS OF THE RELEASE DATE OF THIS
 DOCUMENT, THE MISSION HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY FORMAL COMPLAINT ABOUT
 THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTION. HOWEVER, THE MISSION DID RECEIVE
 INFORMATIONAL COPIES OF COMPLAINTS PRESENTED DIRECTLY TO THE
 ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES.

-- COMPUTATION: THE ROUTINE ACTIVITIES OF THE OAS OBSERVER MISSION
 INCLUDED THE PRODUCTION OF A PARALLEL VOTE CALCULATION, A
 STATISTICAL SAMPLE THAT ALLOWED MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE
 RESULTS. GIVEN THE PRINTED COMPUTER REPORTS AND THE ANNOUNCEMENTS
 BY ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES, THE OAS CAN CERTIFY THE TRANSPARENCY OF
 THE COMPUTER VOTING PROCESS. THE OFFICIAL CNE RESULTS USE THE
 METHODOLOGY DESCRIBED ABOVE.

-- OTHER OBSERVATIONS: THE RECENT CHANGES IN SOME POLITICAL PARTIES
 CANDIDATES CAUSED CHANGES IN THE TALLYING OF VOTES. MARKING OF
 MORE THAN ONE OVAL ON THE BALLOT MADE THE VOTE NULL AND VOID.
 PRESIDENTS OF THE VOTING TABLES NOTIFIED THE VOTERS OF THE NEED TO
 FILL IN ONLY ONE OVAL.

GIVEN THESE EVALUATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS, THE MISSION CONSIDERS THE
 DECEMBER 6 ELECTIONS OF 1998 TO HAVE BEEN CLEAN, FREE AND
 TRANSPARENT. THE ELECTIONS DEMONSTRATE ONCE AGAIN THE GREAT CIVIC
 AND DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT OF THE VENEZUELAN PUBLIC.

THE MISSION WISHES TO EMPHASIZE THE EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOR OF THE
 CITIZENS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC
 SYSTEM. FURTHERMORE, THE OAS WANTS TO RECOGNIZE THE CNE AND
 REGIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCILS FOR THEIR EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE THE

CARACA 03703 00 OF 03 141616Z 023551 S064457
 ELECTORAL PROCESS, ESPECIALLY IN MOMENTS IN WHICH THE NEW SYSTEM OF
 VOTING AND COMPUTING STATIONS WAS IMPLEMENTED. MOREOVER, IT NOTES

THE FUNDAMENTAL PART THAT THE ARMED FORCES PLAYED VIA THE PLAN
 REPUBLICA.

TO ALL OF THESE GROUPS, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA UNDER
 PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA, THE MISSION EXPRESSES ITS GRATITUDE FOR
 THE FACILITIES DONATED TO DEVELOP OBSERVER ACTIVITIES. THE OAS
 HAILS THE CONSTRUCTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE MEDIA IN INFORMATION
 DISSEMINATION AND VOTER EMPOWERMENT. FINALLY, THE MISSION THANKS
 THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE FOR THE TRUST AND WARM RECEPTION FOR THE OAS
 ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION.

THE OAS WISHES TO EXPRESS ITS GRATITUDE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
 UNITED STATES FOR ITS SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TOWARD FUNDING THIS
 MISSION. OAS WISHES TO EXPRESS EQUAL GRATITUDE TO THE CANADIAN
 GOVERNMENT FOR ITS ASSISTANCE.

CARACAS, VENEZUELA, DECEMBER 6, 1998.

END TEXT

NOVEMBER 30 PRESS RELEASE

3. (U) BEGIN TEXT:

THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) ELECTORAL OBSERVER
 MISSION HAS BEGUN ITS PREPARATIONS TO MONITOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS
 IN VENEZUELA DURING THE DECEMBER 6 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. ROUGHLY
 70 OBSERVERS AND DATA TECHNICIANS, MEN AND WOMEN FROM 19 MEMBER
 NATIONS (ARGENTINA, BARBADOS, BOLIVIA, BRAZIL, CANADA, COLOMBIA,
 COSTA RICA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ECUADOR, GUATEMALA, MEXICO,
 NICARAGUA, PARAGUAY, PERU, SPAIN, SURINAME, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,
 THE UNITED STATES AND URUGUAY) HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO 11 KEY
 REGIONS. OBSERVER HEADQUARTERS WILL BE BASED IN CARACAS, AND
 SMALLER OFFICES WILL BE IN LOS TEQUES, SAN FERNANDO, BARINAS,
 MARACAIBO, BARQUISIMETO, VALENCIA, CUMANA, PUERTO LA CRUZ, CIUDAD
 BOLIVAR, AND MERIDA.

THE FIRST GROUP OF REGIONAL OBSERVER COORDINATORS HAVE ALREADY MET
 IN THEIR RESPECTIVE OFFICES. OBSERVER ACTIVITIES, WHICH WILL COVER
 ALL OF THE STATES AS WELL AS THE FEDERAL DISTRICT (CARACAS), WILL
 BE SIMILAR TO THE ELECTION ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT DURING THE

NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS. OBSERVERS WILL BE IN CONSTANT
 CONTACT WITH ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES, POLITICAL PARTIES,
 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND THE GENERAL CITIZENRY IN
 ADDITION TO ACCOMPANYING CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION ORGANIZATION
 REPRESENTATIVES. ANY COMPLAINTS OR FORMAL CLAIMS REPORTED TO THE
 MISSION WILL BE TRANSMITTED TO THE ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES AND
 SUBSEQUENTLY MONITORED. THE OAS PLANS TO PRODUCE AN INTERNAL
 REPORT ON THE ELECTIONS. THIS ELECTION PREVIEW WILL INCLUDE THE
 RESULTS OF AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPUTER SYSTEM AS WELL AS A
 PROJECTION OF VOTING TENDENCIES FOR THE INTERNAL USE AT THE OAS
 MISSION.

AS OF NOVEMBER 30, THE MISSION, ESTABLISHED BY SECRETARY GENERAL
 DR. CESAR GAVIRIA AND AT THE INVITATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF
 VENEZUELA AND THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL OF VENEZUELA, HAS NOT
 RECEIVED ANY COMPLAINTS NOR CHARGES RELATIVE TO THE DECEMBER 6
 ELECTORAL PROCESS. FURTHERMORE, THE MISSION HAS NOT DETECTED ANY
 PROBLEMS THUS FAR THAT WOULD HINDER OR INTERFERE IN ANY WAY WITH
 THE ELECTION OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.

MR. EDGARDO C. REIS, CHIEF SPECIALIST FOR THE OAS DEMOCRACY

UNCLASSIFIED
 UNCLASSIFIED
 UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

INCOMING

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ARA/NEA REARCS

PAGE 03 OF 03 CARAC 03703 BD OF 03 141616Z 023551 SD64157
PROMOTION UNIT, WILL LEAD THE GROUP OF OBSERVERS. MR. REIS HAS
EXPERIENCE WITH VARIOUS ELECTION OBSERVER MISSIONS IN OTHER OAS
MEMBER NATIONS. THE MISSION RELIES ON THE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL
SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF ARGENTINA, CANADA, AND THE UNITED
STATES.

THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES IS THE OLDEST REGIONAL
ORGANIZATION IN THE HEMISPHERE AND HAS COMPLETED ALMOST 40 ELECTION
OBSERVER MISSIONS IN OVER 15 NATIONS IN RECENT YEARS.

END TEXT

MASON

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED